

**Remarks of Governor Christine Todd Whitman,
Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
at the
U.S. Climate Change Science Program
Planning Workshop for Scientists and Stakeholders
Washington, D.C.**

December 4, 2002

Thank you, Dr. (Jim) Mahoney, for that introduction. I also want to thank you for your leadership as director of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program. Here at the EPA, we are glad for the opportunity to again partner with you on one of the more challenging issues confronting our Agency and our government.

I want to begin by reaffirming EPA's commitment to increasing our understanding of the nature, causes, and effects of global climate change. For more than a decade, the United States has been a world leader in climate change research. That's a position we intend to retain.

With the release of the U.S. Climate Change Program's new strategic plan, the federal government is taking an important step toward meeting the commitment laid out by President Bush in June of last year.

As you will recall, he pledged to advance "an effective and science-based approach to addressing the important issue of global climate change," and that's exactly what this Administration is doing.

After all, as the President pointed out, we know that the surface temperature of the earth is rising. And, as the National Academy of Sciences has concluded, the changes observed over the past several decades appear likely to be mostly due to human activities.

But the National Academy also concluded that we cannot rule out that some significant part of these changes is a reflection of natural variability. And even when looking at the impact human activity has on global climate change, there's still an imperfect understanding of exactly how such activity is having an effect. The recent NASA-funded study that suggests that land use patterns may contribute as much to climate change as do greenhouse emissions certainly points to the fact that there is still much to learn.

I am proud that EPA will play a key role in advancing the work of the Climate Change Program's strategic plan. We've given a lot of thought as to how best we can use our expertise, experience, and resources to make a contribution. That is why I am pleased that EPA will soon be releasing our Research Strategy for our Global Climate Change Research Program.

This strategy will enable EPA to focus its efforts to achieve the best and most useful results. It will ensure that our nation's decision makers have the best scientific knowledge available about how climate change could affect the cleanliness of our air, the purity of our water, and the health of our people and our ecosystems.

This effort will be led, of course, by EPA's Global Change Research Program within our Office of Research and Development. It will be fully integrated with the President's Climate Change Research Initiative. And, as I mentioned a moment ago, it will focus on those areas EPA knows best – air and water quality, human health, and ecosystem health.

Of course, as many of you know, EPA won't do all this alone. We like to conduct our research activities in partnership with others, including those in academia. With that in mind, I'm pleased to announce today that EPA's Global Program has recently awarded nearly \$5 million in grants to three universities – Penn State, Michigan State, and Texas A & M – to allow them to study the potential effects of climate change in their regions and to develop possible strategies for meeting those effects.

Of course, while we have been working on our strategic plan, we've also been working on a parallel track to develop useful tools that decision makers can use now. I'd like to highlight a few of them.

- Our assessment teams have developed a web-based tool that will enable water resource managers to consider and prepare for climate change as part of their long-range planning;
- We have evaluated the vulnerability of drinking water plants in coastal areas to possible rises in sea level. I'm pleased to report that we've found that these plants can cost-effectively meet such a challenge, should it present itself; and,
- We have been working closely with the International Joint Commission to examine how the U.S. and Canada can protect our shared water resources in the Great Lakes region.

These are just three examples of the many ways EPA is already working to meet the President's commitment to produce useful and scientifically sound information on global climate change for both the public and policy makers.

But while we are engaged in improving our scientific knowledge, we are also engaged in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As President Bush has said, "While scientific uncertainties remain, we can begin now to address the factors that contribute to climate change." So let me share with you some of what we've been doing at EPA to promote greenhouse gas reductions.

Earlier this year, we launched our Climate Leaders program, a voluntary effort to promote the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by responsible and public spirited corporate citizens. To date, 31 companies have signed on as Climate Leaders, and eight of them have already announced their greenhouse gas reduction goals.

For example, Miller Brewing Company has pledged to reduce emissions by 18% per barrel of production by 2006 and General Motors pledged to reduce their total emissions by 10% for all of their North American facilities by 2005. This is the sort of leadership we should expect – and encourage – from the corporate sector.

In addition, through our Energy Star program and its 7,000 partners, we are achieving annual greenhouse gas emission reductions equivalent to removing 12 million cars from the roads. By buying Energy Star products, even individual consumers can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Another real success that proves the value of voluntary programs is EPA's effort to reduce methane emissions. Through these programs, which include the Landfill Methane Outreach Program and the Coalbed Methane Outreach Program, methane emissions today are actually 5 percent lower than they were in 1990. Due to the ongoing success of these efforts, we expect emissions to remain below 1990 levels through at least 2020, even as the economy continues to grow.

Taken together, I believe this Administration is meeting America's obligation to the world with respect to global climate change. As the President said last year, "The issue of climate change respects no border. Its effects cannot be reined in by an army nor advanced by any ideology. Climate change, with its potential impact on every corner of the world, is an issue that must be addressed by the world."

I am confident that EPA is doing its part. And while no army can rein in climate change, we will prove that an army of scientists can advance our knowledge and inform our decision making, so that the choices we make will reflect both good science and good stewardship.

Thank you.